

## **Maple Shade's Main Street Wins State Nod**

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MAPLE SHADE -- Main Street is getting a makeover.

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs announced yesterday that Maple Shade's Main Street business district has been selected for its "Main Street New Jersey" program.

The state program is designed to address declining downtowns by helping municipal officials and property owners improve the economy, appearance and image of a Main Street area.

"The business association has been looking for ways to revitalize Main Street for several years now," Deputy Mayor Lou Manchello said. "We're looking forward to rallying the town, the businesses and the residents, and work with the state to revitalize downtown Maple Shade."

The Department of Community Affairs accepts applications and designates selected communities to join the program every two years.

The communities receive technical support and training from the state to assist in restoring their Main Streets as centers of community and economic activity, according to the department.

Maple Shade received a "partner" designation from the department. Partner designations are given to towns whose focus will mostly be on organization, development, growth and awareness during the first year of the program.

The program also requires capital investment, but instead of having mandatory fees, the program raises money through donations and contributions. For the "partner" designation, the township had to raise at least \$40,000.

The Maple Shade Business Association and the Maple Shade Advisory Board of Commerce, with help from the Township Council, worked together to complete the state application.

The application, submitted to the department last month, included some 450 letters of support for Maple Shade, including pledges for monetary and in-kind contributions toward revitalization.

Manchello said the council plans to contribute \$20,000 per year, and more than \$20,000 has been raised by Main Street business owners, township residents and businesses outside the downtown district.

Ellen McDowell, president of the Maple Shade Business Association, said the money would pay for promotional items, Web site maintenance and design work. A director would also be hired to attract new businesses that fit the goals for Main Street.

"The town is doing well in terms of occupancy, but we would like to see more retail businesses and restaurants and make it more of a pedestrian-friendly model so people can get out of their cars and walk around Main Street," Manchello said.

Last year, the business association failed to garner support for a business improvement district which would have required all commercial entities on Main Street to contribute money for a revitalization effort.

Maple Shade joins Burlington City and Mount Holly as the only municipalities in Burlington County with the Main Street New Jersey designation.

The towns of Caldwell, Montclair and Orange in Essex County, Newton in Sussex County, and Somerville in Somerset County, also were designated by the department for the program this year.